

review will analyze the proposal as well as a full range of reasonable alternatives and the associated impacts of each. The Services are currently in the process of developing alternatives for analysis. Under a No Action Alternative, incidental take permits would not be issued, and Simpson would continue a forest management program, which avoids take of federally listed species. The applicant's Plan alternative proposes that the Services issue incidental take permits and that Simpson would implement the Plan on 214,000 acres of Simpson's Washington timberlands. Another alternative proposes blending the standards and guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan and the proposed Plan. Under this alternative, the Services would issue incidental take permits, and Simpson would manage their lands in accordance with standards and guidelines less restrictive than the Northwest Forest Plan but which exceed those of the proposed Plan. A fourth alternative proposes that Simpson manage their lands in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan. Under this alternative, the Services would issue incidental take permits, and Simpson would manage their land accordingly.

Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties to ensure that the full range of issues related to these proposed actions are addressed and that all significant issues are identified. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the environmental review should be directed to the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service (see ADDRESSES).

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and implementing regulations (40 CFR parts 1500 through 1508) and of other appropriate Federal laws and regulations and policies and procedures of the Services for compliance with those regulations. It is estimated that the draft EIS will be available for public review during the second quarter of 1999.

Dated: January 19, 1999.

Thomas J. Dwyer,

Acting Regional Director, Region 1, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon.

Dated: February 2, 1999.

Kevin Collins,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 012999C]

Marine Mammals; File No. 77-4#2

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Receipt of application for amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543-1097, has requested an amendment to scientific research Permit No. 917.

DATES: Written or telefaxed comments must be received on or before March 11, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The amendment request and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s): Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713-2289);

Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, (978/281-9250); and

Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, St. Petersburg, FL 33702-2432 (813/570-5312).

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on this request should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Documentation Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this particular amendment request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301) 713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy

submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period. Please note that comments will not be accepted by e-mail or other electronic media.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ruth Johnson or Sara Shapiro 301/713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to Permit No. 917, issued on May 12, 1994 (59 FR 25872), as amended July 12, 1995 (60 FR 37054) and November 24, 1997 (62 FR 48821) is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered fish and wildlife (50 CFR 222.23).

Permit No. 917 authorizes the permit holder to conduct a number of studies on several cetacean species as well as gray and harbor seals in the northeastern U.S. and Canadian waters. The research activities include: Vessel surveys, aerial surveys and photogrammetry, photo-identification studies, and the collection of biopsies.

The permit holder requests authorization to: (1) increase the number of biopsies for most species; (2) biopsy mother/calf pairs; (3) expand the study area to include all waters of the North Atlantic, from the equator to latitude 66.5 degrees North; (4) approach for non-invasive ultra sound measurements; (5) take Bryde's whales, harp and hooded seals; (6) capture, tag and sample harbor seals; (7) up to 3 accidental mortalities of harbor seals; (8) import/export samples for genetic studies; and (9) tag sperm whales.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: February 2, 1999.

Ann D. Terbush,

Chief, Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources.

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